

**Μαρία Στυλιανίδου****Palamas as translator of the sonnet**

Palamas in the introduction to *Ξανατονισμένη Μουσική*<sup>i</sup> writes that: “Δοκίμασα να μεταφράσω λίγες στροφές από την αρχή της Μιρέγιας· η αξία της δοκιμής, ελάχιστη, στέκεται στο ότι διατηρώ απαράλλαχτο το ίδιο μετρικό σχήμα των επταστίχων της.” In Palamas' belief, keeping the form of the source poem is something important. Palamas' treatment of the form reflects the importance of form in his own poetry, exactly as with the Parnassians. The “value of form” is one of the basic principles of Parnassism.<sup>ii</sup> The Parnassians believe that Poetry can't exist without form any more than the soul can exist without a body and so they seek perfection. Palamas is always influenced by this basic principle.

Palamas is faithful in keeping the form of the original poem in his translations. Even if sometimes in the original poems the line is short or broken into parts, this is accordingly the case with Palamas' translated poems (i.e. “Δείλιασμα”, “Θεός αν είμουν”). So, if we compare the forms with these of the originals we find that Palamas strikingly preserves the characteristics of each poet.

The dominant form in Palamas' collection of translated poems is the sonnet: Palamas included 98 translated poems in *Ξανατονισμένη Μουσική* and 25 of these poems can be categorised as sonnets.<sup>1</sup> Palamas was of course prolific writer of his own sonnets. His preference for the sonnet is attested not only by this large number but by his own words: “το Σονέττο δεν εγεννήθηκε για να

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<sup>1</sup> According to Mitsakis, Palamas wrote 170 sonnets and translated 23, so his total number of sonnets is 193. However, as proved by this study and earlier mentioned by Samouil, Palamas translated 25 sonnets. So the total number of Palamas' sonnets is 195.

πετά ελεύθερο στα τετραπέρατα· ήρθε για να κελαηδή στο δεντρί του. [...] η αιώνια, πάντα ίδια και πάντα μία, Ποίηση, πάντα κρατά το Σονέττο στον ίσκιο της απαρασάλευτο”.<sup>iii</sup> At this point there emerges the question: why does Palamas have a preference for the sonnet? In the introduction to “Δεκατετράστιχα” (ibid) Palamas analyses his effort to join the European Petrarchan tradition, but there are additional reasons that lead him in the direction of the sonnet.

Palamas' preference has to do with the structure of the sonnet in relation to what is often called a dualism (“δυναδικότητα” or “διπολικότητα”) in his work.<sup>2</sup> Karantonis<sup>iv</sup> and Doxas<sup>v</sup> underline that Palamas' life, idiosyncrasy and work is filled with this contrast. Sofroniou<sup>vi</sup> agrees by saying that Palamas believes in the “Hegelian antithesis and the beauty of contradictory truths.” Tsatsos<sup>vii</sup> and Chourmouziou<sup>viii</sup> also speak about Palamas' “αντιφατισμό” whereas Dimaras<sup>ix</sup>, perhaps more convincingly than these other critics, draws our attention to the titles of Palamas' books where this contrast exists between the words, for example “Ίαμβοι και Ανάπαιστοι”, “Η Πολιτεία και η Μοναξιά”, “Η Ασάλευτη Ζωή” etc. Despite the fact that many accused Palamas of “αντιφατισμό”, Doxas<sup>x</sup>, however, correctly says that even if sometimes “τυγχάνει να επικρατήσει ο ένας από τους δύο συντελεστές της αντίφασης, τούτο δεν αποκλείει και τη συνύπαρξη του άλλου, ή, πίο καλά, την συνεκδήλωσή του. [...] Ο Παλαμάς μέσα από τον αντιφατισμό του μας έδωσε την υποκειμενική του αλήθεια.” This subjective truth, or better subjectivity, is a key element to Palamas' work and indeed in his translations, reflected both in his choice of texts and his way of translating them. Undoubtedly then, the use of the sonnet form helps Palamas to present us the subjective truth through contradiction, as the classic sonnet is organised in two parts, two systems, the octave and the sextet between which there exists a mental and/or emotional differentiation corresponding to a

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2 A poem in *Η Πολιτεία και η Μοναξιά* with the title “Ύμνος της Διπλής Ψυχής” emphasizes this well known feature of his work

rhythmic differentiation caused not only by the tempo change<sup>3</sup> but by the change of rhyme too.<sup>xi</sup> Palamas' seamless engagement with the sonnet is dictated by the stable and simultaneously flexible sonnet form in which there is found the challenge for Palamas to balance the asymmetric, in an effort to achieve his prosodic searches- especially a kind of Kalvos' "πολύτροπη αρμονία".<sup>xii</sup>

Apart from dualism, Palamas' preference for sonnets has to do with musicality too. According to Bermann,<sup>xiii</sup> the sonnet arose at a time when rules of versification were bound to rules of rhetoric and when accepted phonic and even musical patterns were deemed essential to poetic expression. What is more, the sonnet is a kind of poem characterized by its musicality and its name comes from the latin word "sonus" which means sound.<sup>xiv</sup> Zakythinos<sup>xv</sup> also considers sonnet as "μουσικώτατον τούτον στιχουργικόν σύστημα". Taking into account the strong importance music has for Palamas in poetry, his preference for translating sonnets is natural. This preference serves his priority in writing his collection of translated poems, that is the rearrangement of the source texts' musicality.

Another reason for Palamas' preference for sonnet translations is that the sonnet, has become particularly associated with the praise of ideal beauty. It elegantly shaped some of the prevalent courtly love themes, such as the praise of an idealized lady. Saralis<sup>xvi</sup> also notes this: "Απ' τα καλύτερα θέματα των σονέττων είναι τα ερωτικά, κι απάνω σ' αυτά γράφτηκαν περισσότερα, τα καλύτερα κένα σονέττα απ'τους Ιταλούς στιχουργούς, τον Ντάντε ..." So, the sonnet facilitates Palamas to express the ideal of beauty which he identifies mainly with female figure, nature, mythology, and serves him to develop some of his favorite themes such as love.<sup>4</sup>

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3 Recitativo or andante in the octave and allegro in the sestet

4 A concentrating categorisation of Palamas' sonnet themes can be found in the table made by Mitsakis (1994: 12-13).

Furthermore, the sonnet in the process was established by Dante as an eloquent lyric expression and sonnets such as “Tanto gentil” elaborate themes of erotic and spiritual love.<sup>xvii</sup> Saralis<sup>xviii</sup> also identifies this: “...κείνο που πρέπει να κυριαρχή στα σονέττα, είναι ο καθαρός λυρισμός [...] Είναι χαριτωμένο και λεπτό είδος που πρέπει ολόκληρο να πάλλεται από άκρατο λυρισμό και να λάμπει από κάθε είδους στολίδια που μας διδάσκει η ποιητική τέχνη.” Palamas himself admits that in the introduction to “Δεκατετράστιχα”:<sup>xix</sup>

Και με τα προκείμενα Δεκατετράστιχα δηλώνεται κυκλικά ο πολυειδής κόσμος, πρόσωπα και πράγματα που συγκινεί τον ποιητή. Ενθύμησες και προσδοκίες, φαντάσματα που γίνονται πλάσματα, όνειρα που είναι για τον ποιητή πραγματικότητες, γεγονότα που εξαυλώνονται [...] Όμως μαζί και μεστώνονται τα σονέτ' αυτά με την απήχηση που φέρνουν στον ποιητή περιστατικά της εσώψυχης ζωής του.

Later Palamas confesses that “Δεκατετράστιχα” is “το πιο πλούσιο βιβλίο του και η ζωή του όλη και η διαθήκη της”.<sup>xx</sup> As for the use of the term “Δεκατετράστιχα”, Mitsakis<sup>xxi</sup> says that it was first used by Antonios Manousos during the general effort to Hellenize the term sonnet. According to Moraitis<sup>xxii</sup> Palamas' choice to use the term “Δεκατετράστιχα” instead of the term sonnet is felicitous:

[...] Τα ποιήματα μπορεί να έχουν, την εξωτερική μορφή του σονέτου' μια καινούρια δύναμη όμως έχει διαλύσει την εσωτερική αρχιτεκτονική και την πλαστική έκφραση, η ποιητική σκέψη ξεπηδά τους φραγμούς των τετράστιχων και των τρίστιχων και δίνει ένα καινούργιο σύνολο. Σωστά το πιστοποιεί με τον τίτλο ο Παλαμάς: δεν είναι πια σονέτα τα ποιήματα αυτά, είναι απλά δεκατετράστιχα.

Mitsakis<sup>xxiii</sup> disagrees with this by saying that “ευτυχώς όμως που ο όρος 'δεκατετράστιχα', ο οποίος αποδείχτηκε άβολος και άκομπος, για να μην πώ και λαθεμένος, τελικά δεν επικράτησε.” Nevertheless, Fuller<sup>xxiv</sup> notices that: “This relationship is of far greater significance than the fact that there are fourteen lines in the sonnet, for not every quatorzain is a sonnet.”

However, leafing through the volume, a transformation of the sonnets' form becomes evident: at the beginning of the book, the sonnets are divided in stanzas whereas sometimes later they are given as a continuous whole. Specifically, according to table in Appendix 1, only in ten out

of the 25 sonnets the strophes are separated with space and thus are clearly distinguished between them.

In the case of sonnets, we can observe that in some of Palamas' translated sonnets, the classical distinction between the octave and sestet exists. For instance, in the sonnet with the title “Η ζωή απο μακριά” there is an opposition between life's good picture of people who have not yet lived and life's negative picture of people who lived. We notice that this opposition in the content of the sonnet corresponds to the differentiation of octave and sestet and hence, according to Samouil<sup>xxv</sup> the two opposite poles of its content, correlate with human thought.

In some Palamas' translated sonnets, however, there is no such distinction. For example, in the sonnet titled “Το παιδί που πεθαίνει”, it may be observed that there is a progress in the meaning of the sonnet, but not an intense opposition. The unfolding of the meaning doesn't create surprises. The fact that the progress of the one, substantially, meaning of the sonnet is not impressive, allows us to characterise it as “γραμμικά αναπτυσσόμενο”.<sup>xxvi</sup> Nevertheless, the two systems of sonnet still exist.

On the contrary, in the sonnet “Πού Πάνε;”, the syntax blurs the contrast between the two parts: the end of the sentence of the second quatrain does not coincide with the end of the verse but it continues in the tercet that follows. Even if the distinction of the octave and sestet disappears, we can say that another opposition exists that separates the two systems: the communicative one. In the sestet there is an address in speech within an interrogative sentence and a use of the second singular, whereas in the octave we have third person, there isn't direct speech and there isn't any question.<sup>5</sup>

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5 Πού πάνε;  
Όσοι χαθούν από έρωτα, στον ουρανό δεν πάνε.  
Τις ρεματιές, τα μονοπάτια, τις βραδιές δέ θάχουν,

Motivated by the aforementioned sonnet “Πού πάνε;”, I attempted to examine if there are other translated sonnets by Palamas which present differentiations in their expected organisation, which indicates the distinction of sonnet in two quatrains and two tercets. In Appendix 2, the 25 translated sonnets are classified into sonnets that follow the traditional distinction of the strophe and into sonnets that follow some other kind of division, apart from the normal one. In all the cases we noticed that due to the use of enjambments which are often emphasised by the punctuation marks that follow, the syntax and the meaning of the verse does not coincide with the limit of their strophes but it continues to the next strophe.

In seven of the 25 sonnets, a different syntactic division from one where the syntax and meaning coincides with the limits of the strophe, is followed. This is characteristic of the renewal of the sonnet form that Palamas attempts as a translator. At this point, it must be highlighted that the perturbation of syntax-and thus of continuity of meaning- concerning the strophes of sonnet between the octave and sestet is powerful, whereas the perturbation between quatrain and tercet is less powerful. In the six translated sonnets the syntactic disturbance is less powerful, as it becomes between quatrains and tercets, with the exception of the sonnet “Πού Πάνε;”, in which, as we mentioned, the two systems of the sonnet disappear because of the powerful syntactic disturbance.

Examining all the translated sonnets by Palamas, it can be observed that in 14 out of the 25 sonnets, the syntax does not coincide even with the limits of certain individual verses (Appendix 3). As a result, they are syntactically broken, multiplying the phrases in their interior. This gives the

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και μέλι στις παράδεισος δέ θα χαρούν τη γλύκα  
που να τους κάμη του φιλιού το μέλι να ξεχάσουν.  
Στον άδη τον παντοτεινό δεν κατεβαίνουν, ούτε.  
Τί κάηκαν απ' τα κόκκινα χείλια, και του δαιμόνου  
το νύχι δεν τους τα τρυπάει τα σωθικά στον άδη  
σαν την αγιάτρευτη υπογία και σαν τα καταφρόνια  
σκληρά...Πού πάνε; Ποιές χαρές υπέρτατες, ποιοί πόνοι,  
κι αν απομένουν οι καρδιές και μεσ' τους τάφους ίδιες,  
θα ξεπεράσουν και χαρές και πόνους που αισθανθήκαν;  
Μια που όλα τα είχανε στη ζωή, τον ουρανό, τον άδη,  
τ'απέραντα που αποθυμάς, τ'απέραντα που τρέμεις,  
χάνονται, πάνε σύψυχοι· στο τίποτε περνάνε.

sense of fragmentation that was uncommon in sonnet writing during that period.<sup>xxvii</sup>

Completing the observations on this last point, it is worth noting that sonnet II of the unit “Στίχοι κατά τον 'Αϊνέ” is organised in three quatrains and one final couplet. In addition, the sonnet “Σε κακοστρωμένα μονοπάτια” constitutes a unique case because, as Samouil says,<sup>xxviii</sup> Palamas translates in form of sonnet a poem of Verlaine that was written in four tercets and creates with his translation not a usual sonnet but a reversed sonnet (sonnet à rebours or inverti, sonetto rovesciato).<sup>6</sup>

To conclude, the most common poetic form in *Ξανατονισμένη Μουσική* is the sonnet. Palamas' choice to concentrate so much on sonnets can be seen as a domestication strategy,<sup>7</sup> and be framed within the phenomenon of *εκπαλαμισμός*- as in the rest of his poetic oeuvre the sonnet is also the most prevalent poetic form. All the reasons of Palamas' preference for sonnets are mainly rooted from his individual temperament, his personal poetic sensibility and generally his *habitus*. Palamas is faithful in keeping the sonnet form of the source texts he translates. He does not hesitate, though, to make renewals and changes to the sonnet form. He finds the field of the translation activity a fertile ground to implement these innovations. Some of these poetic renewals are applied later on his original oeuvre too: Palamas' project as a translator had important implications for his own subsequent poetic production.

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6 A reversed sonnet is, as suggested by its name, an entire inversion of the sonnet tradition and form. The translated sonnet “Σε κακοστρωμένα μονοπάτια” is considered as such because it starts with two tercet followed by two quatrains.

7 Domestication and foreignization are two basic translation strategies which provide both linguistic and cultural guidance. According to Venuti, the former refers to "an ethnocentric reduction of the foreign text to target-language cultural values, bring the author back home", while the latter is "an ethnodeviant pressure on those (cultural) values to register the linguistic and cultural difference of the foreign text, sending the reader abroad." (Venuti 1995: 20)

## *Appendices*

### Appendix 1

Translated sonnets where the strophes are separated with space
1. Ave Dea 219 <sup>8</sup>
2 Αυτό το βράδι 252
3 Οι ξεσκέπαστες 259
4. Σε κακοστρωμένα μονοπάτια 309
5. Στον Πόθο 290
6. Ένας ανθρωπάκος 269
7. Τα φτερά 287
8. Η χώρα που γεννήθηκα 367
9. Στίχοι κατά τον Αϊνε II 391
10. Όταν είμουν βασιλιάς 408

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8        The number next to the titles indicates the page where the poem is found in *Ξανατονισμένη Μουσική*, volume 11 of Palamas' *Apanta*



## Appendix 2

Sonnets in which the limits of the strophes exist – traditional distinction	Sonnets in which the limits of the strophes do not exist – new distinction
AVE DEA 219	ΑΥΤΟ ΤΟ ΒΡΑΔΥ 252
ΟΙ ΞΕΣΚΕΠΑΣΤΕΣ 259	Η ΤΕΧΝΗ ΑΥΤΡΩΜΟΣ 278
ΕΝΑΣ ΑΝΘΡΩΠΑΚΟΣ 269	Η ΖΩΗ ΑΠΟ ΜΑΚΡΙΑ 279
ΣΤΟΥΣ ΠΟΙΗΤΕΣ ΠΟΥ ΘΑΡΘΟΥΝ 281	Ο ΔΟΛΟΦΟΝΗΜΕΝΟΣ ΕΡΩΤΑΣ 280
Η ΦΙΛΟΣΟΦΙΑ 282	Ο ΞΕΝΟΣ 286
ΕΡΩΤΕΣ ΤΗΣ ΓΗΣ 283	ΦΘΙΝΟΠΩΡΙΝΗ ΛΥΠΗ 288
ΟΙ ΑΠΙΣΤΟΙ 284	ΠΟΥ ΠΑΝΕ; 289
ΤΟ ΠΑΛΕΜΑ 285	
ΤΑ ΦΤΕΡΑ 287	
ΣΤΟΝ ΠΟΘΟ 290	
ΤΟ ΠΑΙΔΙ ΠΟΥ ΠΕΘΑΙΝΕΙ 291	
Η ΤΡΕΛΗ 292	
Η ΧΑΡΑ 293	
ΣΕ ΚΑΚΟΣΤΡΩΜΕΝΑ ΜΟΝΟΠΑΤΙΑ 309	
ΤΑ ΦΤΕΡΑ 343	
Η ΧΩΡΑ ΠΟΥ ΓΕΝΝΗΘΗΚΑ 367	
ΣΤΙΧΟΙ ΚΑΤΑ ΤΟΝ ΑΪΝΕ II 391	
ΟΤΑΝ ΕΙΜΟΥΝΑ ΒΑΣΙΛΙΑΣ 408	

### Appendix 3

Translated sonnets whose single verses syntactically separate	
1. ΑΥΤΟ ΤΟ ΒΡΑΔΥ 252	9. ΣΤΟΥΣ ΠΟΙΗΤΕΣ ΠΟΥ ΘΑΡΘΟΥΝ 281
2. ΕΝΑΣ ΑΝΘΡΩΠΑΚΟΣ 269	10. ΤΑ ΦΤΕΡΑ 287
3. Η ΤΕΧΝΗ ΛΥΤΡΩΜΟΣ 278	11. Η ΧΑΡΑ 293
4. Η ΖΩΗ ΑΠΟ ΜΑΚΡΙΑ 279	12. ΣΕ ΚΑΚΟΣΤΡΩΜΕΝΑ ΜΟΝΟΠΑΤΙΑ 309
5. Ο ΔΟΛΟΦΟΝΗΜΕΝΟΣ ΕΡΩΤΑΣ 280	13. ΤΑ ΦΤΕΡΑ 343
6. Ο ΞΕΝΟΣ 286	14. Η ΧΩΡΑ ΠΟΥ ΓΕΝΝΗΘΗΚΑ 367
7. ΦΘΙΝΟΠΩΡΙΝΗ ΛΥΠΗ 288	15. ΟΤΑΝ ΕΙΜΟΥΝΑ ΒΑΣΙΛΙΑΣ 408
8. ΠΟΥ ΠΑΝΕ; 289	

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<sup>i</sup> Palamas, K. *Άπαντα*, Μπίρης, χ.τ.ε, <sup>2</sup>χ.χ., (v.11, p.240)

<sup>ii</sup> Marmarinou-Politou, E. 1976. *Ο Κωστής Παλαμάς και ο γαλλικός Παρνασσισμός: Συγκριτική φιλολογική μελέτη*, διατριβή επί διδακτορία, Athens (p.102)

<sup>iii</sup> Ibid: <sup>i</sup> (v. 8, p.303)

<sup>iv</sup> Karantonis, A. 1932. *Γύρω στον Παλαμά*, Athens: Εστία

<sup>v</sup> Doxas, A. 1959. *Παλαμάς: Ψυχολογική ανάλυση του έργου και της ζωής του*, Athens: Εστία

<sup>vi</sup> Sofroniou, S. A. 1959. *The Parnassianism of Kostis Palamas*, p.172

<sup>vii</sup> Tsatsos, K. 1936. *Παλαμάς*, Athens: Εστία

<sup>viii</sup> Chourmouzios, E. 1960. *Ο Παλαμάς και η εποχή του (τρίτος τόμος, οι δέκα τελευταίες συλλογές)*, Athens: Διόνυσος

<sup>ix</sup> Dimaras, K. 1962b. *Κωστής Παλαμάς: Η πορεία του προς την τέχνη*, Athens: Ίκαρος

<sup>x</sup> *ibid*: <sup>v</sup> (p.199-202)

<sup>xi</sup> Jost, F. 1989. *Le sonnet de Pétrarque à Baudelaire. Modes et modulations*, Berne: Peter Lang (p. 87 and 118-124)

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- xii Samouil, A. 2007. *Ο Παλαμάς και η κρίση του στίχου*, Athens: Νεφέλη
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- xxii *Ibid*:<sup>xiv</sup> (p.38)
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- xxiv Fuller, J. 1972. *The sonnet*, London: Methuen (p. 2)
- xxv *Ibid*:<sup>xii</sup>
- xxvi *Ibid*:<sup>xii</sup> (p:187)
- xxvii *Ibid*:<sup>xii</sup>
- xxviii *Ibid*:<sup>xii</sup> (p: 222)